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SIX STORIES



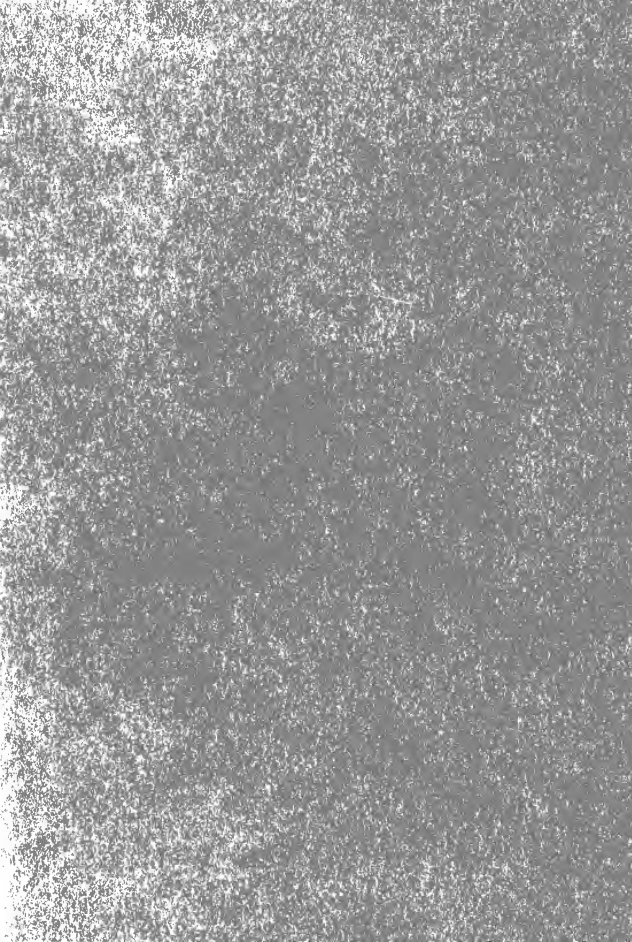


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SIX STORIES

by

GEORGE
HARRISON
PHELPS

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GEORGE HARRISON PHELPS

To My Friends

ON THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW ARE A FEW MESSAGES I HAVE WRITTEN DURING MOMENTS DEVOTED TO QUIET REFLECTION—URGING MYSELF AND OTHERS INTO THE MOOD OF WORKING FOR BETTER THINGS INSTEAD OF WISHING FOR THEM.

BETWEEN THE LINES OF THE FINEST OF THESE LITTLE STORIES IS MY NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO YOU.

George Harrison Phelps



YOU are in the Roman Coliseum. It is the afternoon of the great chariot race. The amphitheatre is packed with people. The women are gorgeously arrayed in blue and crimson and gold. Patricians, poets, statesmen, philosophers, warriors—many in brilliant costumes—lend life and gayety to the shifting scene. The gigantic bowl is alive with light and color. The air is tense with excitement.

The great day of the race is almost ended. The charioteers are nearing the last turn to finish in front of the royal stand. Everyone leans forward. There is no sound throughout the vast Coliseum

save the rush of the flying horses, the thunder of the chariots, the cries of the charioteers.

The speed is terrific. Ben Hur is driving in second place. They approach the last corner. The leaders pitch forward. Driver and chariot and horses all roll in front of Ben Hur.

Like a flash he takes a double hold on the reins and fairly lifting the horses, drives them over the prostrate bodies in his path.

As he swings into the stretch, Artimidora cries to him from the royal box: "Those arms—where did you get those arms?" He shouts in answer: "*At the galley's oar! At the galley's oar!*"

In the hold of a trireme, Ben Hur got those mighty arms that carried him to victory. For years he slaved at a great oar among the hundred other slaves—half naked and sweating—the lash at his back.

"Do the thing and you shall have the power," said Emerson. After Ben Hur's years of herculean toil it was an easy task to lift the horses over the wrecked chariot and drive them to the front.

All great things are accomplished easily—it is the years, the hours, the moments of preparation that count. Thomas Edison was not twenty minutes proving the value of the incandescent light—he spent half a lifetime seeking the best filament. Abraham Lincoln wrote the greatest speech ever made in the English language—the Gettysburg Address—on the back of an envelope, an hour before he delivered it—yet, the deep understanding, the rugged spirit, the infinite compassion, the whole life of Lincoln thrills in its every word.

Work—constantly, patiently, every day—striving toward the highest and the best. The moments of supreme action will come to you as they have come to all men we call



great. *The way of success is the way of struggle.* Strive for perfection in the little things you do, and when the great moment comes you will be ready. You get your strength in the sweat of your body—in the tumult of your mind—in the aspiration of your soul.

To win the race you must first be a slave at the Galley's Oar.





I HAD known the man for several years. I had seen him climb to affluence and position and power in one of the greatest packing houses in the world. Steadily he had climbed, and slowly—never faltering. Then, one day he took a leap ahead that placed him at the very top of his business. As he departed from his birthland for London, to assume control of the European business for his firm, I marveled at the indefinable, invisible power that must be hidden in his big frame.

Often I wondered what it was inside this great, good-natured man that drove him on so steadily.

One day I found out. Let me pass the story on to you.

On a morning shortly after war was declared, the Chicago office of this packing house was humming with repressed excitement. Word had been received from an European power that only a guarantee of immediate delivery was necessary for an almost fabulous order for beef—millions, many millions, it counted. Quick action was necessary—someone must be at this nation's war office at once! A list of available transports must be had, and there was only one man who could handle the details that would win this gigantic contract. He was on his vacation, somewhere on the continent—no one knew exactly where.

At 10 o'clock in the morning a cable flashed from Chicago to London—"Where is Hall?" Definite advices must be in the hands of the minister of war

before night. Representatives of other firms, equally well prepared, were already racing toward Paris. It all meant millions. The hours dragged slowly for the officials in Chicago. They waited impatiently—all thought abandoned save the message from across the sea. They knew that its contents would mean the loss or gain of the greatest single order of its kind ever placed.

A few minutes past 3 o'clock—or just five hours after the inquiry had flashed to London—the answer came; a message that today is inscribed in the records of this firm as evidence of the highest type of salesmanship and initiative. It was brief—from the war office, Paris:

“I am on the job. Transports being loaded. Hall.”

This man had closed the deal! He had heard that the French government must have beef and have it quickly. He stopped at nothing. Leaving his family in



a little town near Luzerne he rushed on to Paris, gathering information as he went—lists of transports that could be commandeered; all the ammunition necessary to win this great battle of salesmanship.

I marvel no longer at the man's success. Now I know the secret.

He was *on the job*.





WHEN I was in college there was a man at Princeton named Eddie Hart. He was a real man. When I think of him I think of Kipling's Fuzzy Wuzzy, in which he says—"You're a poor benighted heathen, but a damned good fighting man."

Of course, Hart was neither poor nor benighted. He was a stupendous success in college and he has since risen high in the business world. He has made good under conditions that would give the ordinary man arterio sclerosis.

For three years he was captain of the Princeton football team, and every year



he made brighter the name and fame of the Orange and Black. He was a born leader and he had the indomitable courage of a matador. During his third year, in a tough battle on a slushy field, he broke his neck and was carried out for dead. And he might have died then and there, or he might have lain flat on his back in a hospital for the remainder of his life. But he didn't. His fine come-back was due partly to luck, but mostly, I think, as I remember him, to his "damned good fighting spirit."

After lying still for a few weeks he had a special harness made to hold his head from resting on his spine, and with this strapped to his great shoulders he startled the world by appearing again at the head of his team.

He used to carry around in his pocket the school song of Eton. He said it was the spirit of this song that made him win. I believe it—and I believe that it

holds a message for the man who would win at anything. Here's a part of it:

The sand of the river is sodden red,
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;
The gatlings jammed and the colonel dead
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of Death has brimmed its banks,
And England's far and Honor a name,
But the voice of a school boy rallies the ranks,
"Play up! Play up! and play the game!"

When I think of Hart playing against Harvard and Yale and winning with a broken neck—every moment in danger of snapping the slender cord of life—I haven't much patience with the salesman or dealer who has all his organs and faculties in perfect order and crying for action, and yet sits and bemoans the fact that he has had a cancellation or two—that the weather is hot—that he can't get enough cars to fill his orders.

It's *nerve* he needs—nerve to rustle out for two new sales for every one he's lost.

That's why I'm telling the story of
Eddie Hart.

That's why I say:

"Buck up! Buck up! and play the
game!"





IF YOU know it's true—if you know you're right—don't be afraid to say, "By God, this way it is!" Never mind the sneers and jibes. Make your own chart and hold your course. *Right* will always go ahead, and prove itself at last. Forget Custom and Tradition, for they are only barnacles on your ship of Success. They fix the limits of progress for the man who never dares to break the bonds.

One night I sat chinning with the Big Boss and he told me the story of Old Mike McDonald. Perhaps you will find a bit of inspiration in it—anyway, here it is:

Old McDonald was editor of a Western paper, one of that great race of pioneer literary supermen now fast disappearing from the earth. Mike was of the species that is kindly yet gruffly stern and his work was another term for law.

One of his chief diversions was to make big blue rings around words his "cub" reporters wrote. Mike was a "bug" on spelling. Often he would lean over a reporter's shoulder and correct copy that was just begun. Some of the "cubs" who deemed it their special duty to keep Noah Webster's grave strewn with fresh flowers, occasionally uttered great and joyous shouts of triumph when, on consulting the big and tattered dictionary in the office corner, they found that Webster stood with them and not with Mike McDonald. Then, if courageous enough, they told Mike about it.

But, strangely, such a discovery never made much difference with Mike. The

word went into the paper as he had corrected it. Even the "bible of Webster" couldn't shake him. He felt that he was right—and he stuck.

On such occasions the "cubs" sniffed the air and smiled scornful smiles behind his back. "Bullhead," they muttered. And they repeated it with added emphasis on discovering that Mike had not only ordered his version run in the paper but had put the same big blue mark on Old Noah himself. He had corrected the dictionary!

One day Mike laid down his big blue pencil for the last time and crossed the river to where spelling doesn't matter much. His dictionary was kicked about the office for months. Nobody noticed it now. Finally it came to the attention of a new man on the staff—a man who recognized and appreciated *courageous originality*. He packed Mike's book in a box and sent it to the publisher.

The next edition of the dictionary contained most of Mike's corrections.

Have *you* the nerve to be a Mike McDonald?





THE instinctive judgment of the public seldom errs. It will sense the little insincerities, the little discourtesies, the little exaggerations as quickly as the mother feels the approaching danger to her child.

"If you would pass down the western slope of life unlonely, with friends to make your last days round and full, guard well the subtle influence of your personality on those you meet today," says Thoreau.

As it is with life, so it is with business. The seemingly insignificant things are often the most important. Sometimes

we may feel that a little white lie, a bit of idle gossip, a broken promise really does no lasting harm. But every thought we think, every deed we do, every promise we make, either strengthens or weakens the fabric of our business. Just as a tiny drop of aniline dye will color a whole hogshhead of water, so will the carelessness of these little things color the opinion in which we are held by those with whom we deal.

Out in Santa Rosa, the wonderful botanical gardens of Luther Burbank are carefully guarded, but one day the gate was left open and a little girl, peering through, could not resist the temptation to take a lily growing near the wall. There was only one blossom on the stalk—all the others had gone to seed. In her haste to pluck the flower she stripped the stalk of the ripened pods and the seeds fell in the sand and gravel. A short time afterwards as Mr. Bur-

bank was walking through the garden he missed the lily. In dismay he realized that the work of years was wasted. With tears streaming down his cheeks he called to his sister and the two went back to hunt for the seeds in the trodden sand. There, on his hands and knees, the famous Burbank searched patiently, hour after hour, until the tiny seeds—the almost invisible objects of his painful effort—had been recovered.

* * *

To the little girl the flower was a minor thing—pretty, fit to be plucked. To Burbank it was a wonderful achievement, based on endless hours of toil and experimentation. Her thoughtless delight at thus finding a lily to wear, was to him a grave misfortune. Little wonder he wept.

As easily as the child wrecked the creation to which Burbank had given years, so may a man wreck and despoil

the principle of his business. A careless word, a little "knock," a bit of subterfuge, and dry rot has started on its way.

It's these little things under which foundations crumble. Watch them!





BE a neighbor—not a knocker. So long as men come together in business, in the home, in the church—in fact, while human habitation covers the globe, the man devout in the Religion of Neighborliness, who touches with surest hand the greatest number of human hearts, will be a giant among his fellows.

There is an old story on this point that I want to tell you—an old story of a Quaker and his quaint philosophy.

He stood one day watering his horse at the village trough when a new neighbor paused with not over-pleasant greeting. "What manner of people live in this village?" the new-coming resident asked.

"What manner of people didst thee live amongst before?" retorted the amicable old Quaker, affectionately patting the neck of his horse.

"The people in the town I came from," answered the stranger, "were mean. They were narrow, they were forever suspicious, and quick to take unfair advantage."

"Then," said the Quaker, "I am sorry, for thee will find the same manner of people here."

And the newcomer found it as the old Quaker had told him.

Again the Quaker chanced to be at the trough when another stranger came into the village. He, too, inquired about the temper of the populace, and to him as well the Quaker put the question, "What manner of people didst thee live amongst before?"

A broad and cordial smile overspread the features of the stranger as he spoke.

"Friend," he said, "there are none finer than the people I left behind. They were neighbors and I loved them. It was hard for me to leave—I loved them all, but I had to journey on."

The face of the old Quaker beamed with welcome. "Be of good cheer, my neighbor," he said, "for thee will find the same fine people here."

And again it was as the old Quaker said.

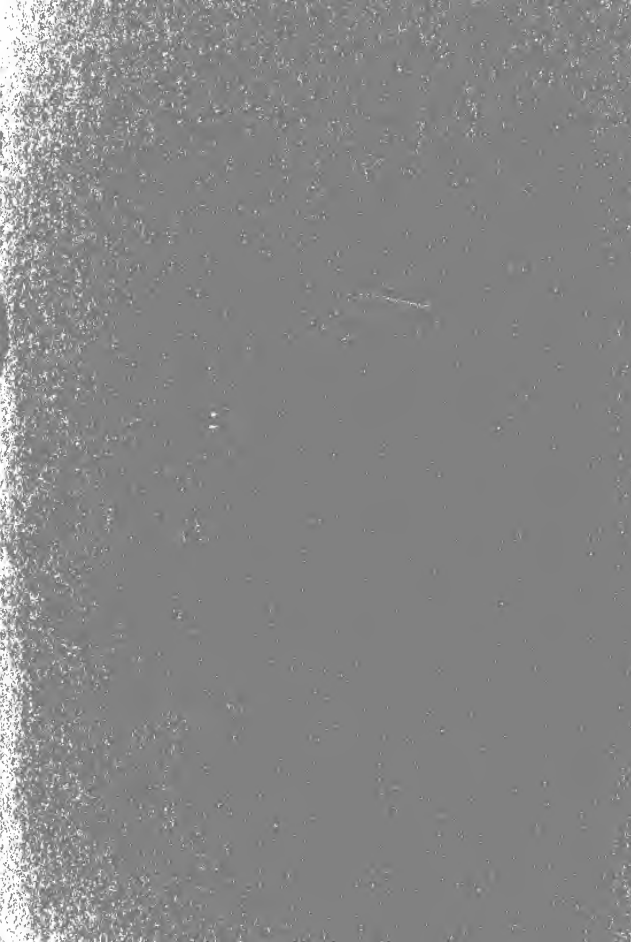
"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

It is an old proverb, fraught with meaning and with wisdom. It is not a vague platitude; neither is it a myth of sentiment. It is a fundamental law of life, as sure and true in its working as the law that gives the sun its heat.

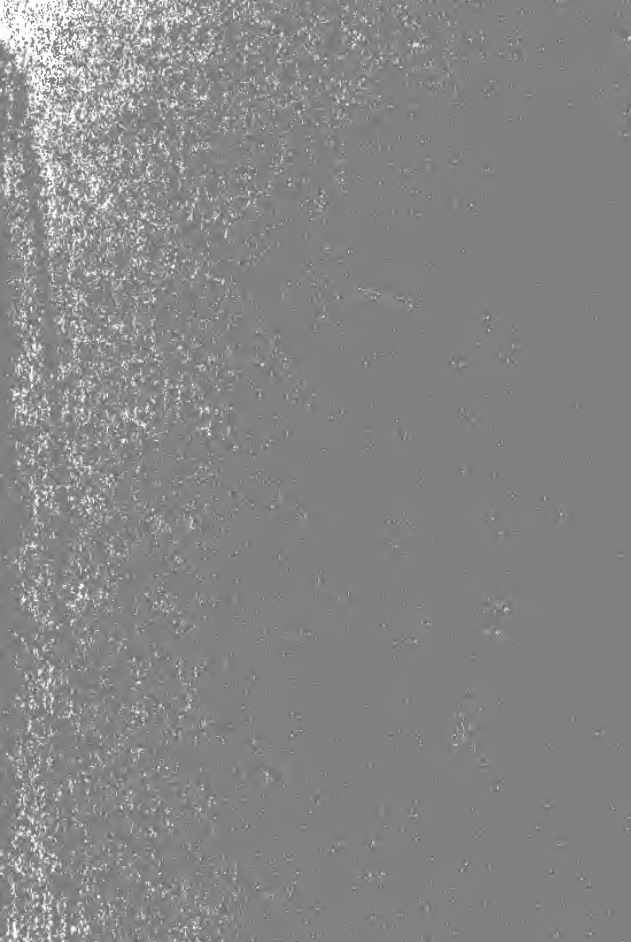
And so I say to you, fellow dealers and salesmen:

Tell me a little about *your* town and *your* neighbors and I'll tell you a lot about *you* and *your* business.









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